

~~TOP SECRET~~

16 March 1955

BRIEFING MEMORANDUM

25X1A5a1 On 5 November 1954 a memorandum was directed to the Director of Central Intelligence by [REDACTED] outlining a plan for comprehensive photographic coverage of the Soviet Union utilizing aircraft capable of attaining altitudes approximating 70,000 feet. The plan envisages the use of the latest techniques in photography in order to provide both mapping and detailed site coverage of the U.S.S.R.

Following the receipt of this communication, the Director of Central Intelligence and the Secretary of the Air Force met and discussed a collaborative effort for implementing the proposal. Still later the President authorized the Director of Central Intelligence to proceed with the activity as a new clandestine penetration technique. By 9 December 1954 preliminary negotiations were underway with the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation looking towards the construction of a suitable airframe and by 11 December a meeting was held under the auspices of Mr. Trevor Gardner, Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Air Force for Research and Development, which brought together personnel of the [REDACTED] and representatives of the aircraft manufacturer and the photographic equipment manufacturers.

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On 2 January 1955, following appropriate arrangements with the Director of the Bureau of the Budget, the Director of Central Intelligence authorized the issuance of a letter contract for the manufacture of the aircraft specified by the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation. During the first week of January letters of intent were prepared covering procurement

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NOTICE

This material contains information affecting the national defense of the United States within the meaning of the espionage laws, Title 18, USC, Secs. 793 and 794, the transmission or revelation of which in any manner to an unauthorized person is prohibited by law.

of specialized photographic equipment and electronic intercept equipment.

An interim task force comprising representatives of the Air Force and the Central Intelligence Agency is beginning to move into high gear in the planning and administrative activities relating to this program. By the first week in February wind tunnel tests were completed on the vehicle, arrangements had been made with the Pratt & Whitney Company to expedite delivery of two types of high performance jet engines, and the basic designs of a substantial part of the photographic equipment were nearing completion. Arrangements were made for special fuel studies to be performed. Basic decisions on feasibility were therefore possible at this time and decisions to proceed to the manufacturing phase were made. The present status of the program reflects the early stages of the production phase. Fuselage, wing and tailfin sections of the aircraft are being assembled at a special installation of the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation plant. A mock-up engine has been provided and production engines are scheduled for delivery starting in May and a more advanced type engine starting in November. The first engine type has been checked out ^{an} in altitude chamber and performs substantially as expected at altitudes of 70,000 feet. Preliminary tests on the improved version indicate that expected improvements will be achieved. Modifications of existing photographic equipment incorporating latest scientific advances is underway with first delivery expected by late summer 1955. The program for the development of special lightweight films in order to increase coverage

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per mission has been initiated with the [REDACTED]
Electronic intercept equipment, specialized communications equipment,
and the adaptation of specialized covert navigational systems are in
the design and preliminary component manufacture stage with initial
delivery scheduled for late summer.

Thus far the effort has brought together into a compact team
the highest scientific and industrial skill of the country in a manner
never achieved in peace-time. The industrial organizations involved have
given the effort the highest priority and the outstanding men of their
respective organizations. Our present schedule calls for a flight
test starting August 1955 and in view of the progress to date it is
anticipated that this schedule will be met and that operational readiness
will be achieved by the early part of 1956.

HIM:hh